



Town of Warren, Rhode Island

Minutes of the Economic Development Board

The Town of Warren, RI Economic Development Board met at a Regular Meeting on May 16, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. at Warren Town Hall. The presiding officer was Karen Dionne. Board members present were Sara Volino, Tyler Dixon, Kathleen Tucciarone, Ben Terry, Keith Phillis, Mark Lombardi, and Walter Conklin. Jessica Pflaumer was absent. Keri Cronin from Discover Warren was also in attendance.

1. Review and Approval of Minutes from the Regular Meeting of April 18, 2016

The minutes from the regular meeting held on April 18, 2016 were reviewed by the board via email. A motion was made by Ms. Volino to approve the minutes, the motion was seconded by Ms. Tucciarone, and all members were in favor.

2. Update on status of new municipal website.

Ms. Dionne updated the board on the most recent progress on the new website. Recently Ms. Dionne and Mr. Conklin had a meeting with the Town Manager and the Town Planner. The Town Planner, Kate Michaud, has drafted an RFP. The RFPs will need to be posted before the fiscal year ends on June 30, 2016. There is a possibility that potential companies will make a presentation before the RFP is posted. There were no further questions from the Board regarding this agenda item.

3. Update and report from Resolution in Support of Business Initiative Workgroup.

Mr. Phillis reported that the Resolution was approved by Town Council. The workgroup is getting together to make sure all of the committee members are familiar with the wording on the survey to gather accurate data. After this step, the work group members will meet with Mr. Eames. Mr. Phillis stated that the survey will cover the business district, the village business district and the waterfront business district; it will not include the rural districts (Frerichs Farm was used as an example). The work group plans on beginning the survey in the near future. Ms. Dionne said she is working on business cards. Ms. Dionne suggested that there should be positive coverage on the survey in the Warren Times Gazette. The Board had no further questions regarding this agenda item.

4. Discussion of Main Street area business property survey.

At the April meeting, Mr. Bolster suggested that there needs to be immediate attention paid to Main Street. Ms. Dionne asked if the Board was open to a survey that would focus

specifically on Main Street properties and businesses; the survey would cover a description of the aesthetics of the property, size of the commercial space, and information on the landlords and tenants. Mr. Dixon stated that the upcoming zoning survey would be covering similar information. Mr. Dixon also said that Mr. Bolster is interested in developing a strategy for investment on Main Street. Mr. Eames stated that he cannot contact business owners without due cause; he suggested that the Town Manager could reach out to problem landlords. Also, he suggested that Discover Warren, as a merchant group, could reach out to business owners and educate them on zoning issues, such as signage violations. He felt that friendly education would be more proactive than the town issuing violations. The Board briefly discussed some of the positive press coverage on Made In Warren, as well as a recent article on Warren in the Providence Journal.

5. Discussion and action on EDB project list for the remainder of 2016 for report to Town council and posting on website.

The Board discussed various initiatives including the possibility of a joint business open house with Discover Warren after data is collected from the upcoming zoning survey. Also, the Board discussed exploring tax initiatives for businesses and completing a study on the types of businesses that need “bricks and mortar” retail space. Ms. Dionne said she had discussed the future of the storefront improvement program with Ms. Michaud; the new program should have less requirements and be easier for business owners to utilize for improvements. Also, the Board briefly discussed the future of the National Grid building on the Barrington line.

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Tucciarone, the motion was seconded by Mr. Phillis, and all members were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristin M. MacDonald
June 18, 2016

